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Activities of the Department of Public Information: strategic communications services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Strategic communications services, one of the three subprogrammes of the Department of Public Information, is responsible for supporting the substantive goals of the United Nations by devising effective communications strategies on priority issues and carrying out communications campaigns with the objective of broadening an understanding of the Organization's work. This involves publicizing key messages of the Organization through coordinated communications campaigns, reaching out to target audiences and strengthening its outreach to the public in both developed and developing countries through the network of United Nations information centres.

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 63/100 B, summarizes the key advances made by the Department from July 2008 to February 2009 in promoting the work of the United Nations to the global audience through its strategic communications services.

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Introduction

In its resolution 63/100 B, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Public Information submitted for consideration by the Committee on Information at its thirtieth session and requested the Secretary-General to continue reporting to the Committee on the activities of the Department.

In the same resolution, the General Assembly called on the Department to provide specific information on a number of its activities. The Bureau of the Committee on Information, which met in November 2008, advised the Department to present the requested information in three parts, in accordance with the three subprogrammes of the Department: strategic communications services, news services and outreach services. The present report, submitted for the consideration of the Committee at its thirty-first session, is divided in two parts. Part one addresses thematic communications campaigns in such areas as the Millennium Development Goals, climate change, human rights, the question of Palestine, and Africa, with a focus on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Part two examines the role of the network of United Nations information centres, including the promotion of multilingualism in countries where they serve. Unless otherwise indicated, the report covers the activities of the Department for the period July 2008 to February 2009.

Part one: Communications campaigns

I. Adopting a strategic approach

1. The Department of Public Information is tasked with promoting the work of the United Nations by providing timely, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and coherent information to the widest possible global audience. The Strategic Communications Division, which is responsible for implementing the subprogramme relating to strategic communications services, devises effective communications strategies on priority issues and carries out communications campaigns to support the substantive goals of the Organization, with the objective of broadening an understanding of its work. The Division also manages the network of United Nations information centres.

2. In order to achieve the greatest public impact, strategic communications services rely on a strategic approach, which requires setting priorities in a manner that enables the Department to do not only what is most pressing, but also where it can have the greatest impact. This involves publicizing key messages of the Organization through coordinated communications campaigns, reaching out to target audiences and strengthening its outreach to the public in both developed and developing countries through the network of United Nations information centres. In order to enhance the coordination of communications activities, the Department continues to utilize the United Nations Communications Group as a coordinating tool.

3. **United Nations Communications Group:** Established in 2002 by the Department, the United Nations Communications Group has emerged as a strong unifying platform for United Nations communicators throughout the United Nations system. Through weekly meetings at Headquarters, issue-specific task forces and meetings at the principals' level, it continues to provide an effective mechanism to develop and implement common communications strategies. The Group's membership has steadily grown and now includes the entire United Nations system. United Nations communications groups are also active in over 80 countries.

4. To standardize United Nations communications guidelines and to provide an organizational structure for operating in times of crisis, the Group at the principals' level has devised a standard operating procedure. This standard operating procedure, adopted at a meeting of the Group in January 2009, brings together communications focal points of the United Nations system relevant to a particular crisis to act under a common communications structure during the crisis. With the overall goal of coordination, unity and effectiveness of United Nations actors, rather than unifying or restricting the messages, key elements of the standard operating procedure were put in place in early January 2009 during the crisis in Gaza.

II. Thematic campaigns

5. The purpose of the Department's communications activities is to help achieve the Organization's substantive goals. The three basic pillars of the work of the United Nations are development, human rights and peace and security. Accordingly, the Department's communications strategies and activities aim to support and advance the Organization's work in these areas. The Department identified Africa as

a regional focus; and youth as a strategic audience for its work. It was guided by the following approaches: improved coordination; new and expanded partnerships; multilingualism; and evaluation.

A. The Department of Public Information and United Nations peacekeeping operations

6. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs further coordinated their respective work and roles in supporting communications for and about peace and security issues.

7. The Department of Public Information, working in cooperation with peacekeeping missions, disseminated more than 100 press releases targeting more than 30 troop- and police-contributing countries, focusing on the contributions by individual Member States to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. They received prominent attention in national newspapers and wire services, as well as electronic media. Some 230 television stories related to peacekeeping were produced and distributed to broadcasters globally via UNifeed, generating an estimated 5,000 hits on the Teletrax software the Department uses to monitor pick-up by broadcasters.

8. In collaboration with the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste and the Permanent Mission of Timor-Leste, the Department mounted a photo exhibit on the people of Timor and on the United Nations contribution to peace in that country, at United Nations Headquarters in September. United Nations information centres, including in Bogota, Mexico City and Washington, D.C., displayed the sixtieth anniversary of peacekeeping photo exhibit, which had previously been on display at the United Nations Headquarters Visitors' Lobby from 29 May 2008 in observance of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and the sixtieth anniversary of peacekeeping. The exhibit was tailored to illustrate the contributions of major troop-contributors and has been shown in more than 10 locations around the world.

9. The United Nations News Centre web portal (www.un.org/news) — one of the most heavily visited segments of the United Nations website — gave issues and developments related to peace and security prominent coverage in all six official languages, carrying nearly 2,000 news articles on peacekeeping matters over the reporting period. News articles in English and French were distributed via the associated e-mail news service to more than 50,000 subscribers worldwide.

10. **Cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support:** the Department of Public Information and the Department of Field Support helped peace operations convert to a Content Management System website, which unifies branding of the missions, while also reducing the requirement for mission-based webmasters, as maintaining the sites no longer requires technical expertise. Fourteen peacekeeping and political missions have adopted the new template, with some missions using Arabic, French and Portuguese, in addition to English. One of the new sites — for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) at unamid.unmissions.org — has been viewed more than 226,000 times in 2008. The Department of Public Information is also working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on

improving its website and on developing a community of practice network among peace operation public information personnel, to be launched in early 2009.

11. The Department, in collaboration with the Peacebuilding Support Office, held a conference on 12 December at United Nations Headquarters on the topic "Media, communications and peacebuilding", to underscore and coordinate efforts to support media and communications as a key pillar of governance in post-conflict countries. The ministers of information from Burundi and Sierra Leone, as well as leading journalists from El Salvador, Kosovo, Liberia and Nepal participated, along with United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of media, communications and peacebuilding.

12. **Working with United Nations information centres:** Throughout the year, many of the activities carried out by United Nations information centres focused on peacekeeping operations. These include:

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Bogota** organized a three-week programme entitled "Helmets for Peace" at 10 universities in Bogota as well as the Diplomatic Academy.
- **The United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro**, in association with the Training Centre for Peacekeeping Operations of the Brazilian Army, developed a number of joint activities aimed at training Brazilian military personnel to be deployed in peacekeeping missions. In 2008, the Centre was named after Sergio Vieira de Mello, who was among those killed in a terror attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad in 2003.

13. **Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse:** The Department of Public Information worked closely with the Conduct and Discipline Unit of the Department of Field Support and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Public Affairs Section to devise a procedure for reporting publicly on the allegations and cases being handled by that office. The Unit, with support from the Department of Public Information, is working on a web-based database to allow for more transparent tracking of the process of all cases, while respecting the privacy of United Nations personnel as well as victims.

14. All of the Department's news and media products were utilized to raise awareness about sexual exploitation and abuse and to increase understanding of United Nations efforts to combat such abuse. The Department produced specific stories related to the allegations against peacekeepers serving in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as actions taken by United Nations peacekeeping operations to implement a zero-tolerance policy on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Department also provided coverage of meetings where the subject was considered in the context of the deliberations of the Security Council, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on the Status of Women.

15. **International Day of Peace:** A unique campaign — Txt4Peace — was carried out to raise awareness of the International Day of Peace on 21 September. Some 20 million messages were sent, most by mobile phone companies which distributed peace messages to their subscribers. More than 150,000 messages were collected from individuals in 140 countries and posted on www.peaceday.2008.org. Many of the messages were also displayed on the large monitors in the General Assembly

Hall before the general debate on 23 and 24 September and published in a booklet which was distributed to all Member States.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Manama** worked with a telecommunications company to send the Secretary-General's text message on the International Day of Peace to 700,000 subscribers.
- **The United Nations Information Centre in Nairobi** partnered with a mobile company, which received over 100,000 individual text messages on peace.
- **The United Nations Information Centre in Pretoria** partnered with a cellphone service provider to send peace messages to approximately 13 million subscribers in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, and in southern Africa, including in South Africa and Swaziland.

B. The question of Palestine

16. Under the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, 10 Palestinian journalists (4 men and 6 women) participated in the Department's training programme for Palestinian journalists from October to December 2008, bringing to 132 the total number of Palestinian journalists trained since the programme began in 1995. The programme included a week-long Internet training session aimed at strengthening the skills set of the participants as media professionals, in part by providing them with the technical know-how to develop and maintain websites in Arabic, with special attention to accessibility issues.

17. The sixteenth International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, which the Department organized in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria in Vienna on 2 and 3 December, was another key activity of the Programme in 2008. Approximately 150 participants took part, including Israeli and Palestinian political and civil society representatives, as well as journalists.

Box
"Peace is more than a photo-op"

One of the participants in the 2008 media seminar on the question of Palestine wrote in *The Jerusalem Post*:

> "A journalist from Jerusalem doesn't often get the chance to talk to a colleague from Algeria, even off the record. A chat with the Cairo Bureau Chief of *Al Arabiya* News Channel ... was also illuminating ... Peace is more than a signed document and photo opportunity. The aim should be to stop people from suffering and being killed ... We might not have made peace, or even danced together (in Vienna), but perhaps we had taken a step — or two — in the right direction."

18. In November, United Nations information centres and services in Brussels, Buenos Aires, Mexico, Moscow, Pretoria, Tokyo, Tunis, and Vienna, among others,

organized activities in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. A travelling version of the permanent exhibit on Palestine on display at United Nations Headquarters was produced in Arabic, English and Spanish.

19. Other activities include:

(a) The United Nations News Centre portal introduced a special "News Focus" segment on the Middle East;

(b) Frequently updated news stories were distributed by e-mail to over 54,000 subscribers;

(c) The Department's multimedia coverage of formal meetings and press conferences on the question of Palestine included 75 detailed meeting summaries in English and French during the reporting period.

20. **Crisis in Gaza:** In early January, during the crisis in Gaza, the Department initiated a communications strategy so that all public information spokespeople, including those in the Middle East, were in harmony in their communications. As part of this plan, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) held regular briefings inviting United Nations entities and partners in Jerusalem. The Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General hosted regular video press briefings featuring officials at Headquarters and in the field, including directly from Gaza. United Nations information centres and other United Nations field offices were briefed regularly with guidance on messages and activities of the Secretary-General, the Security Council, UNSCO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and others.

21. Throughout the Gaza crisis, the Department's News and Media Division provided thorough print, radio, television and photographic coverage of all events at Headquarters, including emergency sessions of the Security Council on weekends and evenings, and the resumed emergency special session of the General Assembly. Eighty-six press releases were issued during the first three weeks of the crisis. The United Nations News Centre portal carried over 90 stories during the same period. It also featured a special "Photo Story" slide show on the Secretary-General's trip to the region. A separate "Middle East" button on the webcast page was created, providing easy Internet access to United Nations Television coverage on the issue. The Arabic Unit of United Nations Radio provided clients and broadcast partners with multiple news reports, features and interviews daily. The Department's producers conducted interviews with officials working on the crisis on the ground and at Headquarters; these were posted for global audiences on the United Nations News Centre portal under its "Newsmaker" feature and distributed to broadcast partners via United Nations Radio's eight language units. United Nations Television worked with partners to get footage on and from the region for a series of Gaza-focused television packages distributed to broadcasters online and through satellite feed.

22. The Department also supported the Secretary-General's official visit to the Middle East with spokesperson services, photographic coverage — the United Nations photographer was able to feed back 39 images from Gaza and 5 images

from the Israeli border town — and media liaison support for the journalists accompanying him.

C. Human rights

23. The United Nations system-wide human rights advocacy campaign for the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a main focus of the Department's public information efforts over the reporting period.

- Materials produced at Headquarters, particularly the special sixtieth anniversary edition booklet on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, were widely utilized by field offices, NGOs and other partners for events around the world. Nearly 180,000 copies of the booklet were sent out from Headquarters throughout the year in all official languages.
- The KnowYourRights.org website developed by the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels served as a focus for organizations and individuals planning anniversary events, with the "Wall of events" feature including over 400 events from 55 countries. In addition, over 750 websites in more than 50 languages linked to the KnowYourRights.org website and the total number of page views for the campaign was more than 350,000.
- The official sixtieth anniversary website in all official languages was a key entry point for viewing and downloading campaign materials, with a total of more than 9,500 hits on the Campaign Materials page of the English site in the period March 2008 to January 2009. Overall hits to the English site during the same period totalled more than 1.4 million. Other language sites received steady traffic also, with more than 180,000 visits during this period to the French and Spanish sites, around 124,000 to the Russian site and approximately 30,000 to the Arabic and Chinese websites.
- The Department also created a new website, "UDHR: an historical record of the drafting process", which provides access to the full text of the historical documents of all meetings that led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The annual Department of Public Information/NGO conference was held under the theme, "Reaffirming human rights: Universal Declaration at 60". Held for the first time away from New York, at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the conference attracted over 1,100 participants representing 65 countries from 461 NGOs.
- United Nations information centres were very active throughout the year in organizing events for the anniversary, ranging from a Human Rights Run with 2,500 students in New Delhi to a photography exhibition in Yerevan. For the first time, a parallel regional student conference was organized by the Information Centre in Mexico City with the participation of students from 14 countries that coincided with the Department's Annual Student Conference on Human Rights, held at Headquarters.

- A musical concert to observe the anniversary was organized by the Department in the General Assembly Hall, sponsored by the Government of Spain and featuring Messenger of Peace Maestro Daniel Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Quintet.
- United Nations Radio and United Nations Television produced topical reports on subjects ranging from the history of the Declaration — which included the use of historic audio — to features on the state of human rights today.

D. Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide

24. The Department's Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide launched a special online feature of the *Visions of Rwanda* photography project in six official languages, as well as in Kinyarwanda. The project brought together survivors of the genocide, taught them basic photography skills and enabled them to capture images of their daily lives, their memories, hopes and dreams for the future. A postcard in English and French was produced to promote the online feature. Work also began on the production of a travelling exhibit.

25. The "Lessons from Rwanda" travelling exhibit was shown in several locations, including at several universities in Rwanda, in partnership with the information office of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Kigali, and at two locations in Burundi. In partnership with the Government of Sweden's Levande Historia agency, the exhibit was adapted into a guide (in Swedish) for teachers of high school students. Two United Nations radio pieces highlighting the challenges faced by Rwandan widows, and reconciliation efforts in Rwanda were made available on the Programme website.

E. Millennium Development Goals

26. Promoting the Millennium Development Goals was a key focus of the Department in 2008. The Department worked closely with the relevant substantive offices and United Nations system partners to coordinate and promote the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals (25 September) and the launches of three major reports: the recommendations of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group (1 July), the first report of the Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force (4 September) and the annual Millennium Development Goals Report (11 September). It also played a major role, along with the Millennium Campaign, in the "Stand Up and Take Action against Poverty and for the Millennium Development Goals" initiative.

27. The launch of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group recommendations by the Deputy Secretary-General at the African Union Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 1 July, jointly coordinated by the Department and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), received considerable media attention around the world, especially in Africa. The Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force report and the annual Millennium Development Goals Report 2008 were launched by the Secretary-General in New York. In addition, over 20 national or regional launches and curtain-raiser events for the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals were organized by United Nations Information Centres, United Nations offices and UNDP offices.

28. For the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, the Department worked with its inter-agency partners to issue a press kit in English and French, including press releases and background fact sheets on each goal. The Department also redesigned the main Millennium Development Goals website (www.un.org/millenniumgoals) as a gateway to the United Nations system's work on the issue, with direct links to the relevant agency web pages. The site received on average over 5,000 daily visits in September and over 10,000 visits on the day of the High-level Event. A special website for the High-level Event offered continuously updated information about the more than 50 partnership events, as well as press materials, statements, news and a compilation of outcomes and commitments.

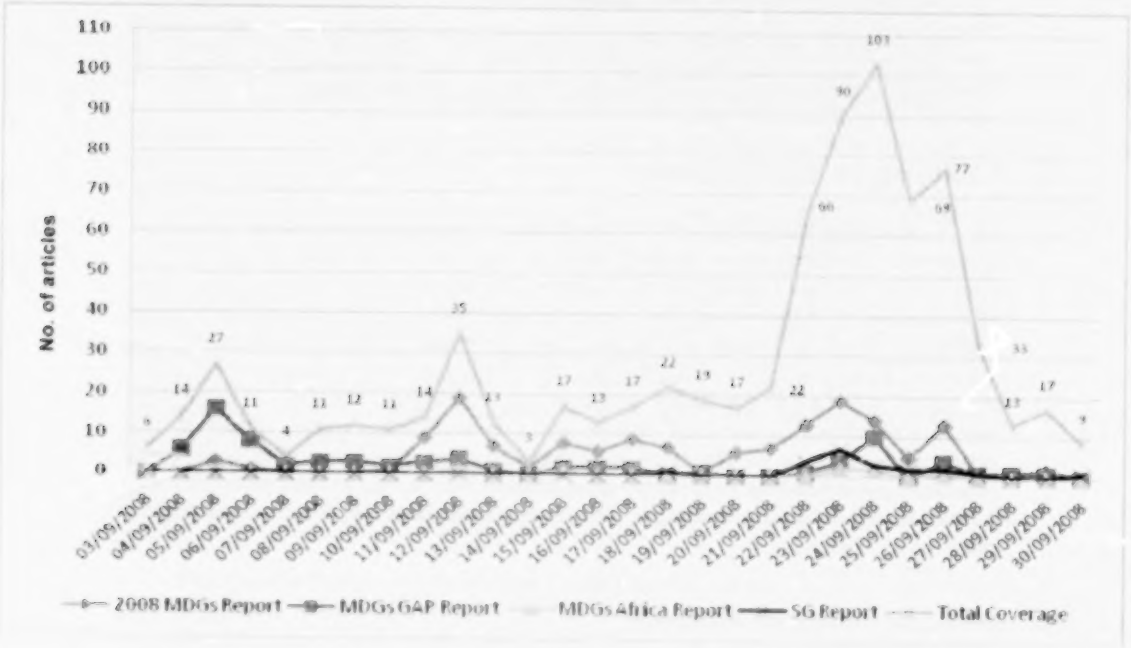
29. In coordinating efforts by communications partners to project a unified image of the purpose and outcome of the High-level Event and dozens of partnership events, the Department helped to ensure that the commitments made by Member States, United Nations system entities, philanthropic foundations and civil society organizations at a wide range of partnership events were compiled and issued as a press release on the day of the event. The coordinated communications campaign generated a positive media coverage, including in major international media such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, focusing on the over $16 billion in commitments made.

30. The line-up of Millennium Development Goals reports and events succeeded in generating a voluminous amount of media coverage. Highlights include:

- A total of 767 clippings collected from 61 countries throughout September showed that more than 70 per cent of the coverage included at least one of the key United Nations messages, most often (in 27 per cent of all articles) "Donor countries must meet their aid commitments".
- The Secretary-General was quoted in 46 per cent of all clippings.
- The High-level Event was covered in 40 per cent of all articles collected, the Millennium Development Goals Report 2008 in 20 per cent, and the Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force report in 10 per cent.

31. As expected, the last week of September registered the highest volume of coverage. The figure below demonstrates the central role played by the launches of United Nations reports in building up media interest for a major United Nations event.

Figure
Media coverage of Millennium Development Goals reports and events



32. The analysis of the coverage on the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals illustrated the success of drafting clear and concise communications messages, proactively designed to work with the news of the day. The media campaign exceeded the Department's benchmark for key message penetration in media coverage by more than 10 per cent, with 71 per cent of the coverage including United Nations messages. At the same time, the analysis found that the large number of reports and side events during the week of the High-level Event competed with each other for media attention, rather than having a multiplier effect; only one of the numerous high-level side events, on malaria, which was designed with a specific media focus, was able to generate significant media coverage.

33. **Stand Up for the Millennium Development Goals campaign:** United Nations information centres played a key role in supporting the "Stand Up and Take Action" initiative led by the Millennium Campaign and its partners, mobilizing a record-breaking 116 million people, to literally "stand up" against poverty and for the Millennium Development Goals over a three-day period. Many "Stand Up" events received high-impact attention from national and local media, and generated innovative new partnerships with civil society and the public sector — building strong awareness and support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Cairo** joined forces with Government and local religious leaders to mobilize 10 million people to stand up against poverty at weekly prayer services.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Manila** worked with the Government, enlisting support from the President of the country and her cabinet, and generating participation by some 35 million people.
- **In Belgium and South Africa**, United Nations information centre offices worked with soccer federations to mobilize tens of thousands of people at sports events to show their support for the fight against poverty.

F. Financing for development

34. Culminating the year's work on development issues, the Department mobilized to provide communications support both in the lead-up to, and onsite for, the International Review Conference on Financing for Development, held in Doha, from 29 November to 2 December. The Department prepared a press kit and daily press releases in English, French and Arabic, and generated extensive webcasting and broadcasting arrangements. Facilities and press briefings were organized for the 795 journalists who were accredited to cover the conference. Media coverage was particularly strong in the Gulf region and the developing world, linked to the participation of some 40 Heads of State and Government, mostly from developing countries. Arrangements were made for a studio to be set up at the conference site for Al-Jazeera, which ran extensive live coverage and interviews on both its Arabic and English channels.

G. Dialogue among civilizations

35. During the reporting period, the Department continued to provide communications advice to the secretariat of the Alliance of Civilizations, in cooperation with the Alliance's communications and public information team. The Department facilitated the recording of a Fox News programme on the Alliance's film fund. In November, the Department coordinated a meeting between the Alliance secretariat and visiting representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, regarding the 2009 Durban Review Conference.

H. Climate change

36. The Department continued to chair and coordinate the 17-member inter-agency United Nations Communications Group Task Force on Climate Change. The Task Force meets by videoconference and telephone every other month to share information, discuss strategy, develop communications products and coordinate messaging and activities, such as for the high-level events during the General Assembly and for the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008.

37. The Department, on behalf of the Task Force, continued to update and improve the website, "Gateway to the United Nations System's Work on Climate Change", which serves as a portal to climate change information from across the United Nations system. Original reporting from the Poznan Conference was provided by the Department on this site.

38. The Department serves as a focal point on public awareness and communications issues for the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) committee on climate change and, in this regard, worked with the CEB secretariat to produce a booklet, "Delivering as one", on the activities of the United Nations system to address climate change. The publication was distributed to delegates and participants at the Poznan Conference. The Department also assisted the CEB secretariat in preparations for a side event in Poznan featuring the heads of United Nations system agencies, to demonstrate how the United Nations system is working together on climate change.

39. Media analysis conducted by the Department at the request of the Framework Convention secretariat, reviewing 1,306 articles about the Poznan Conference in 67 countries, showed that interest in the negotiation process remained very high in most regions, even though Poznan was not promoted as a conference where agreements would be reached or breakthroughs achieved. The bulk of the reporting was neutral, factual and geared to convey the positions of various countries in the negotiations and the state of play of the negotiations. Over 50 per cent of the coverage picked up key United Nations messages, particularly about the need for an agreement in Copenhagen.

40. The network of United Nations information centres continued to carry out various public information activities to highlight climate change, often targeting youth.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Canberra** hosted a conference on climate change and human rights at the Australian National University on 10 December 2008, with participants from the Pacific region, including Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu.
- **The United Nations Information Centre in New Delhi** organized a sound and light show to convey climate change messages. The show drew over 1,000 visitors on its first day.
- **The United Nations Information Centre in Pretoria** invited high school students from four schools in Pretoria to participate in an international videoconference with schools in five other cities around the world.

41. In early 2009, the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels launched its second European public information campaign, entitled "CoolPlanet 2009". This web-based campaign will focus on climate change and will be modelled on the successful KnowYourRights campaign.

I. Violence against women

42. The Department worked actively to publicize the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2008, highlighting the Secretary-General's "UNite to End Violence against Women" campaign. The Department's multilingual website for the Day offered a range of materials and inter-agency links (www.un.org/events/women/violence/2008).

43. Media coverage of the International Day included articles by wire services such as Associated Press and Inter Press Service; major news outlets such as the BBC; women's magazines such as *Ms. Magazine*; and newspapers throughout the

world. Most articles focused on the announcement by the United Nations Development Fund for Women of the 5 million signatures gathered through its "Say NO to Violence" campaign. BBC News and *Ms. Magazine* explicitly referred to the Secretary-General's UNite campaign. The *Canberra Times*, Pakistan's *Daily Times*, the Philippines' *Global Nation* and South Africa's *Pretoria News* quoted the Secretary-General's call for stepped-up efforts "to combat attitudes and behaviour that condone, tolerate, excuse or ignore violence committed against women". The appointment of actress Charlize Theron as a United Nations Messenger of Peace, tasked with promoting efforts to end violence against women, was a story that received considerable attention.

44. The network of United Nations information centres marked the Day with numerous events, including:

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Bujumbura** co-organized a series of activities in southern Burundi to mark the Day and to launch the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign on 25 November 2008, including a march on violence against women and children.
- **The United Nations Information Centre in Ouagadougou**, in partnership with the local branch of the Pan-African Association of Journalists, organized a conference on 22 November at the University of Ouagadougou on strategies and best practices to eliminate violence against women.

J. Follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society

45. The Department continued to support activities conducted throughout the United Nations system in implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society. It contributed to media promotion of key activities of the Global Alliance for Information and Communications Technologies and Development, including the launch of a regional network of specialists in Latin America and the Caribbean to assist the region in using information and communications technologies to eradicate poverty.

46. Communications support was provided to the third annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, held in Hyderabad, India, from 3 to 6 December. More than 200 articles in five languages were published about the Forum in national and international media. Through the use of extensive webcasts and transcripts provided online, technology reporters were able to cover the event remotely, a trend that the Department intends to promote in the future.

K. Africa, with special emphasis on the New Partnership for Africa's Development

47. Central to the Department's efforts to draw global attention to Africa's concerns were two major promotional campaigns carried out in the run-up to the September High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Africa and the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, a few days later. In partnership with the Office of the United Nations Special Adviser on Africa, the first campaign highlighted the key challenges to development in Africa, and to the implementation of NEPAD in particular. The campaign featured a press conference given jointly by

the Chair of the African Union and the President of the African Development Bank on the day of the high-level meeting. The second campaign measured progress on achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa and promoted an understanding of what is needed to ensure that the goals will be met.

48. The public information impact of these campaigns was significant. The Department worked with the editors of some 90 of the most influential media in Africa. The United Nations information centres in Africa liaised directly with local journalists. Information centres in other countries were also successful in raising awareness regarding Africa's needs. Through the efforts of UNIC Lima, for example, the leading daily *El Comercio* published a full-page story about Africa's development and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as an interview with the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, on 15 October 2008. Analysis of the media coverage on the above high-level events, monitored throughout September 2008, found that 767 articles were published in 64 countries, almost one quarter of them in Africa. Some 70 per cent of all articles incorporated the United Nations messages. Africa's issues were covered in almost one half of all articles; 25 per cent mentioned Africa prominently; and the high-level event itself was mentioned in almost one fifth of the articles. NEPAD was referred to in 4 per cent of coverage. The media analysis found that the Millennium Development Goals are a central catalyst for coverage on Africa's development needs.

49. The Department's Africa Renewal short feature service, through which articles from the magazine are rewritten into shorter and more popular pieces that are then offered to editors on an exclusive basis in their country, helps to raise awareness of NEPAD throughout the year. Between July 2008 and February 2009, 449 pick-ups were monitored in some 245 different major media, primarily in Africa, and also in Asia and other regions, in English, French, Kiswahili and Portuguese.

50. The Department continued to work with its partners — including the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union and the NEPAD secretariat — to advance the efforts of the Advocacy and Communications Cluster of the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism for NEPAD, based in Addis Ababa. The first of the Cluster's joint activities, "Dialogue on NEPAD", took place in February in Johannesburg, South Africa. It was designed to give the senior journalists working in the African and international media based in Africa better access to the information and tools they need to inform Africans and others of the NEPAD vision, goals, challenges and achievements.

51. The Departments' publications, *Africa Renewal* and *Afrique renouveau* (see www.un.org/AR), continued to provide the underpinnings of much of the Department's work to promote NEPAD. Among the major articles published were several on the global food crisis and its implications for Africa, on climate change, as well as on the role of women in national development efforts.

Part two: The network of United Nations information centres

I. Introduction

1. The Department's network of United Nations information centres comprises 63 information centres, services and information components around the world. Giving a local accent to the global communications efforts of the Department of Public Information, these centres promote a better understanding of the work of the United Nations and therefore build support for it, working with local partners, including Government offices, media and civil society. In recent years, the work of United Nations information centres has come to be defined by three strategic thrusts:

(a) Closer partnership with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country team at the national level and strengthened cooperation at the regional level;

(b) Increased use of local languages;

(c) Expanded use of new information and communications technologies.

II. Expanding cooperation locally and regionally

A. United Nations information centres and United Nations country teams

2. Following an agreement reached between the Department and the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office, United Nations resident coordinators who also serve as United Nations information centre directors have been assigned additional responsibilities, reflected in a new job description agreed to by the United Nations Development Group at the end of January 2009.[1] These include overseeing the programmatic work of the information centres and ensuring the management of the Department's human and budgetary resources. Resident coordinators are also advised to include in their annual reports the main developments in programme delivery relating to the work of the United Nations information centres as well as those relating to the United Nations country team communications priorities. United Nations information centres, in turn, are asked to support resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in the implementation of their communications priorities.

3. United Nations information centres often partner with United Nations country teams to commemorate special observances and events. To mark United Nations Day 2008, many information centres organized activities and projects with the United Nations country team and with national and local partners, including representatives of the host country. These activities included panel discussions, exhibits, film festivals, concerts, blood drives, radio programmes, student competitions, and school visits.

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[1] Presently, United Nations Resident Coordinators head 28 UNICs as well as 8 United Nations Offices where DPI maintains an information component.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Ouagadougou** coordinated a bicycle race on behalf of the country team and in partnership with the National Cycling Federation.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo** organized a climate change seminar and interactive events for children and adults, together with United Nations entities and offices in Japan.

- Many United Nations country teams also engaged in joint activities organized in connection with the Stand Up and Take Action against Poverty campaign. Several centres produce joint United Nations country team newsletters or websites on the integrated work of the United Nations system in their respective countries on an ongoing basis.

4. With the establishment of United Nations communications groups at the country level, interaction between United Nations information centres and the United Nations country teams has steadily grown, giving rise to a mutually beneficial relationship. With over 80 country-level communications groups now in operation, communications staff of United Nations field offices, in many cases led by information centres, are devising joint communications campaigns, media products and special events. Communications groups are also active at the regional level.

- **The United Nations Communications Group in the United Republic of Tanzania** has undertaken a campaign to train communications staff about effective message delivery. Between January and June 2008, it produced six issues of a newsletter that reflected the consolidated operation of the United Nations system in the country.

- **The United Nations Communications Group in Uruguay** issues a monthly newsletter, *Reform times in Uruguay*, which has emerged as a focal point for system-wide information on the "delivering as one" process in the country.

- **The United Nations Communications Group in Argentina** has a weekly electronic newsletter, *Novedades@UNCG*, which has become a useful tool for encouraging and strengthening communication within the Group, presenting updates of the United Nations country team website, including relevant news and statistics.

5. At the regional level, the Regional Communications Group for Latin America and the Caribbean, coordinated and convened by UNIC in Mexico City, held its third meeting in Mexico City on 18 and 19 February 2009 to discuss the modalities for the establishment of a regional communications platform and to consolidate strategies and tools to enhance the visibility and image of the United Nations system in the region. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss coordinated inter-agency involvement in two key United Nations communications opportunities in the region this year: the observance of World Environment Day and the annual Department of Public Information-NGO Conference, which will take place in Mexico City in 2009.

B. Adding impact at the regional level

6. Efforts in recent years to encourage and strengthen greater interaction and collaboration among United Nations information centres within their respective regions have gained momentum, and are producing results. Translation tasks are shared, technical support for information technology uses and website content is provided, and participation in joint projects on priority themes across regions has increased.

- In Asia, all the United Nations information centres in the region (along with some United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices), collaborated with the United Nations Information Service in Bangkok in the launch of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific annual flagship report, *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*.[2] There were 23 launches in total, 20 within the region, and the others in New York, Geneva and Moscow, which generated extensive media coverage.

- United Nations Information Service (UNIS) Vienna is working closely with information centres in the region. As a result of its collaboration with UNIC Prague, for example, more and more Czech student groups visit the United Nations Office at Vienna for briefings.

7. Through their webmasters, United Nations information centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria have greatly increased their collaboration with other centres within their respective regions in the area of information technology.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Cairo** has developed a standard website template and is working with other United Nations information centres in the region to make their websites more cohesive. It will also assist in the development of a regional website in the future.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Mexico City**, in collaboration with United Nations information centres in the region, has developed thematic regional websites on a variety of United Nations priority issues. It is also developing a regional website portal that will serve as a one-stop entryway into the information generated by the United Nations system in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- **The United Nations Information Centre in Pretoria** has also launched a new template for its website. In 2009, it plans to migrate the websites of other United Nations information centres in Africa to this template along with upgrades to their Content Management Systems. A few of the new features in the template include a prominent display of links to other United Nations information centre websites in the region in a bid to increase cross traffic, a sitemap to boost search engine placement, a simplified navigation system, and other visual aids to improve usability. UNIC Pretoria continues to provide website updates and regular technical support to other United Nations information centre offices in the region. Additionally, it has been assigned administrator and technical support duties of the unic.org e-mail system for all 63 United Nations information centre offices.

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[2] *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2008: Sustaining Growth and Sharing Prosperity* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 08.II.F.7).

C. Reaching target audiences in local languages

8. The network of United Nations information centres is key to the Organization's efforts to reach people around the world and to share the United Nations story with them in their own languages. The centres currently have the capacity to work in 48 languages and have produced information material in over 130 languages. Information centres inform local audiences about the activities and goals of the Organization using traditional media, such as radio, television, newspapers and print materials, as well as new information and communication technologies, including the Internet and videoconferencing. Many centres partner with the local broadcast media and several have established arrangements for a regular newspaper column or page devoted to United Nations issues. The placement of op-eds by the Secretary-General and other United Nations senior officials in major newspapers/media outlets and in local languages raises the visibility of the Organization and its work. Through the combined efforts of its staff in New York and at United Nations information centres, in the course of 2008, 29 op-ed pieces, 13 of them by the Secretary-General, were published. The articles, which addressed many of the most urgent challenges facing the international community, appeared in a total of 482 newspapers and online news sites around the globe in a wide range of languages.

9. For the 2008 International Day of Peace "Txt4Peace" message campaign, the United Nations Information Service in Bangkok partnered with mobile phone companies to send peace messages in English and Thai to 1.7 million subscribers, while the United Nations Office in Yerevan arranged for the Secretary-General's text message, translated into Armenian, to be sent to 600,000 subscribers of a local mobile phone company.

- The Secretary-General's message for United Nations Day 2008 was translated into many languages, including Armenian, Bahasa Indonesia, Czech, Danish, Dutch, German, Greek, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian, Myanmar (Burmese), Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Swedish, Thai and Ukrainian. The United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels presented the Secretary-General's United Nations Day message to the members of the European Parliament in most of the 22 European Union languages in which it works.

- In December 2008, the United Nations in Mexico (UNIC Mexico City, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme), together with the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples and the National Institute on Indigenous Languages, launched a two-year initiative to translate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into more than 20 indigenous languages of Mexico. The first two translations were in the Maya and Mexican Huasteca Hidalgense languages.

- To mark Human Rights Day 2008, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna organized an event where the full text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was read out loud in 31 different languages, including Amharic, Fijian, German, Myanmar (Burmese), Punjabi, Ukrainian and Uzbek.

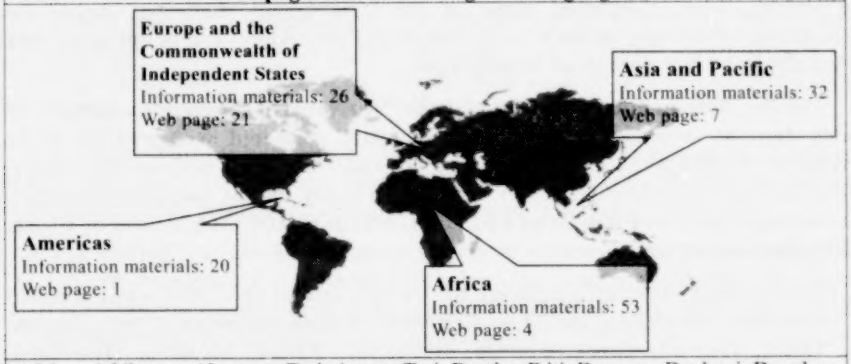
- The United Nations Information Centre in Lusaka provided local language translations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to participants at a Human Rights Day event in December 2008. The languages included Bemba, Chewa, Kaonde, Lozi, Lunda, Nyanja and Tonga.

10. The United Nations information centres website (http://www.un.org/aroundworld/unics) was launched in October 2008 in six official languages. It prominently features publications and other information materials translated by information centres into over 130 local languages (see figure below). In addition, the "Voices from the Field" feature provides short video clips of information centre staff describing the work they do and highlights of information centre materials produced in local languages.

11. Currently, 35 information centres produce their own newsletters/bulletins, either on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. In addition to English, these are produced in 12 local languages: Bahasa Indonesia, Bengali/Bangla, Czech, Georgian, Hindi, Japanese, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Romanian, Turkish, Ukrainian and Urdu.

Figure

United Nations information centres produced information materials and maintain web pages in the following local languages



Africa: Afrikaans, Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi, Bemba, Béti, Dagaare, Dagbani, Dangbe, Dhoulo, Dioula, Ekegusii, Ewe, Fante, Fulfulde, Ga, Gonja, Hausa, Igbo, Kabye, Kaonde, Kasem, Kikamba, Kikuyu, Kiluhya, Kirundi, Kiswahili, Kituba, Lingala, Lozi, Lunda/Chokwe-Lunda, Luvale, Malagasy, Mandinka, Moore, Ndebele, Nyanja/Chinyanja, Nzema, Pidgin-English, Pulaar, Seereer, Sepedi, Sesotho, Shona, Siswati, Soninke, Tonga, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Wolof, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu.

The Americas: Aguaruna, Ashaninca, Aymara, Embera, Guarani, Kuna, Mapuzugun, Mayan, Mexicano de la Huasteca Hidalguense, Mixteco, Nahuatl, Ngabo, Portuguese, Qom, Quechua, Shipibo-Conibo, Toba, Tojol-a'b'al, Tzeltal, Tzotzil.

Asia and Pacific: Achehnese, Bahasa Indonesia, Balinese, Bengali/Bangia, Bhojpuri, Bugisnese, Cebuano, Chin (Falam), Chin (Hakha), Chin (Tiddim), Dzongkha/Bhutanese, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Japanese, Javanese, Karen (Pwo), Karen (Sgaw), Kashmiri, Madurese, Magahi, Minangkabau, Myanmar, Nepali, Persian, Sanskrit, Shan, Sindhi, Sinhala, Tamil, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese.

Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Armenian, Azerbaijani, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Faroese, Finnish, Georgian, German, Greek, Greenlandic, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Kazakh, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Sami/Lapish, Slovak, Slovenian, Swedish, Turkish, Ukranian, Uzbek.

III. Greater use of new information and communications technologies

A. Expanding the use of information and communications technologies

12. The Department is actively using new communications tools such as instant messaging and web conferencing to coordinate tasks, exchange information, foster team building and knowledge capture between staff of its headquarters and field offices. These tools allow the Department to send and receive instant text messages over the Internet and use them for frequent, informal interactions with colleagues around the world cost-effectively. It is also taking advantage of the power and flexibility of using Web 2.0 platforms to strengthen internal collaboration with its field offices.

Box

Using new information technology tools: United Nations Information Centre in Mexico City

Over the last year, the United Nations Information Centre in Mexico City made considerable strides in applying the latest information technology tools to its day-to-day operations, allowing it to expand its support to the United Nations country team in Mexico and to other United Nations information centres in the region. Examples include:

- Hosting point-to-point and multi-point videoconferences between United Nations offices in the region and other United Nations stakeholders, including Government representatives and civil society organizations
- Expanded use of blogs, Google video, postings on You Tube, Facebook and other social networks to bring its work and key United Nations issues to untapped audiences
- Enhanced reliance on webcasting to make key press conferences and other events available online in real time. Media logging-in from distant locations around Mexico and the region can now follow the events in the United Nations Information Centre media room and ask questions by e-mail. Webcasting has also been used to extend the audience for United Nations Information Centre briefings and information training sessions beyond participants on the ground.

B. Training for United Nations information centre staff

13. The Department continues to focus its attention on strengthening the capacity of United Nations information centres so that they may more effectively serve the Organization's communications objectives. To achieve this, the staff of information centres must be equipped with the knowledge and tools that they need to

successfully operate in today's media environment, and training is a crucial element in this regard.

14. In 2008, the Department arranged for nine librarians from information centres to attend a library workshop at Headquarters conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and for seven webmasters to attend a project management workshop under the external training programme. By including staff from centres that have been given a greater regional role, namely, Brussels, Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria, the Department has sought to "train the trainers", enhancing their ability to provide guidance and technical assistance to other centres within their respective regions. As an example, those centres in sub-Saharan Africa without technical staff now send their news and images to the webmaster at the centre in Pretoria to update their websites remotely.

15. In January 2009, seven information officers from information centres in Asia attended a capacity-building workshop on communications and media relations, including during crises. Their participation in this intensive hands-on workshop, made possible with the use of funds from the Office of Human Resources Management for external training, should help these staff to better engage the media around particular issues, thereby increasing public support and visibility for the Organization.

16. Given the challenges of providing training opportunities to field staff, the Department is currently working with the Office of Human Resources Management to explore a variety of online and other options.

IV. Ongoing challenges

A. Physical conditions at United Nations information centre premises

17. Limited resources available to the Department for the operations of its field network have left many United Nations information centres in urgent need of physical renovation and technological upgrading. The majority of United Nations information centres are also located in countries where climate impacts on the condition of office premises. Efforts to improve physical and working conditions of information centres continue to be a challenge, at the same time that the Department is also increasingly devoting resources to security enhancements for information centre premises. In some cases, relocation of information centre premises is required based on the recommendations of the Department of Safety and Security.

B. Bringing the United Nations message to countries not covered by United Nations information centres

18. In its effort to cover Member States currently not served by the network of United Nations information centres, the Department has actively pursued cooperation with other United Nations field offices and their host Governments.

19. On the occasion of the International Day of Peace 2008, the United Nations Governance Centre, a Department of Economic and Social Affairs office in Seoul, spearheaded the "Txt4Peace" campaign in the Republic of Korea. Diverse civil society and student volunteer organizations formed the Korean Organizing

Committee for the International Day of Peace. Their activities included the screening of the Secretary-General's video message for the Day, dissemination of information material, online campaigns and local media coverage. Syndicated Korean cartoonist Wonsoo Lee contributed two cartoons for free promotional use. During the 10-day campaign, 2,000 peace messages were collected through e-mail, websites, telephone and street campaigns. Likewise, for United Nations Day 2008, the United Nations Governance Centre replicated the Department's educational campaign for students.

20. The UNDP Office in Beijing partnered with the Department and received hundreds of online peace messages through its dedicated website on the International Day of Peace.

C. Communications needs of the Portuguese-speaking countries

21. The Department fully recognizes the importance of addressing the communications needs of the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. While the Department appreciates the offer by the Government of Angola for the provision of rent- and maintenance-free premises for the establishment of a centre in Luanda, it should be noted that it is not possible for the Department to cover the related and considerable one-time and ongoing costs of an additional centre within the existing resources currently appropriated for the global network of United Nations information centres.

22. It should nevertheless be recalled that the Portuguese Desk at the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels provides information materials on a daily basis to all United Nations offices operating in Portuguese-speaking countries.

V. Conclusions

23. **The story of the United Nations is an enduring one. As the world's foremost universal organization, it promotes peace, fights poverty and protects those in need. Conveyed through print, audio, video and the Internet, this story has a global appeal and must be told to the widest possible audiences in a form and content best suited to the local population. The Department's strategic communication services have been promoting the United Nations story by pursuing well-defined and targeted delivery of information products and activities. By building partnerships with United Nations system organizations through the United Nations Communications Group, it has also found practical ways to coordinate its messaging, avoid contradiction and eliminate duplication.**

24. **The network of United Nations information centres, located in 63 countries, is responsible for bringing the story of the United Nations to local audiences. Using new information and communications technologies and increasingly speaking in languages used locally, United Nations information centres serve as a vital link between the Organization and its global audience. Through careful planning and coordinated efforts, United Nations information centres are now better equipped, better prepared and better organized in locations where they serve.**